CONTINUED FROM LAST SUNDAY --

BY ROBERT BARR

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### CHAPTER XIX.

Acquaintance. Either the moon had set or lay behind a cloud, for the night was very dark, with no trace of morning yet visible in the east. Frances buckled on her shoes and slood up. The innaceper led forward his horse, and would doubtless have proffered his assistance, but when the spoke he learned the was already in the saddle.

"Set me on the road to Broughton, from please."

f you please."
"The road for tonight is 'Broughton,'
he whispered, then took the horse by
the bridle and led him down the street the bridle and led him down the street. The girl became aware that the town was alive with unseen men, for at every corner the inkeeper breathed the word "Broughton" to some one who had challenged his progress. She real-ded then that Cromwell had surrounded Armstrong with a ring of flesh, a iving clasp, as her own wrist had been circled earlier in the night. At last they came suddenly from the shadow of the houses into the open country, and the night seemed lighter. "Straight on for about a league," said

they came suddenly from the shadow of the houses into the open country, and the night seemed lighter.

"Straight on for about a league," said the inkeeper. "You will be challenged by a sentinel before you reach the castle, and he yill lead you there. Remember that the word going and returning is 'Broughton.' Do not forget, I beg of you, to tell the general that all preparations were made to your liking." and with that the honest man let go the rein, smote the horse on the flank, and bade her good night.

In spite of herself the girl experienced that exhibitation which comes of the morning air, the freshness of the country, and the movement of a spirited horse. She berathed deeply and felt as one brought newly to life again. If it were not for her upbraiding conscience and her distress of mind she could have sung for the joy of living. But the Biblical phrase, "A thief in the night" haunted her and brought a choking sensation to her throat. Once or twice she wavered and almost turned back, for there was still time to undo; but reflection showed her the uselessness of retreat, as the town'she had left was man-environed, and, until Cromwell gave the word of release, Armstrong could no more reach its outer boundary than she could have escaped when his fingers closed upon her wrist. Her sacrifice must be complete, or all she loved were involved in common ruin. So with the phrase ringing in her ears, "Thief in the night," "Thief in the night," through the night, she galloped until her horse suddenly placed his fore feet rigid, and came to a stop so abrupt that the shock nearly unseated her.

"Who goes?" came the sharp challenge from under the trees that over.

unseated her.
"Who goes?" came the sharp challenge from under the trees that overshadowed the highway.
"Broughton," she answered automat-

ically, "Are you the woman from Banbury?" This is Broughton castle. I will lead

your horse."
They descended a slight depression and came to a drawbridge, passed under an arch in the wall, then crossed a tradefurther edge of level lawn, on the further edge of which stood the broad eastern front of the castle, with its numerous mul-lioned windows, a mysterious half light in the horizon playing on the blank in the horizon playing on the blank panes, which recalled the starting one goes of a blind man. The house seemed high and sometre, with no significant plant and certain she would, never nejoy in the about part of a puzzled man. Then high the about part of a blind man. The house seemed high and sometre, with no significant plant and certain she would, never nejoy in the boat of a blind man. The house seemed high and sometre, with no significant plant and certain she would never nejoy in the house remainded the starting of light within. The seatimel beat against the door and it was opened and followed her surface of the safety of the door and it was opened and followed her guide into the ample half, from well stood at the head of the house and followed her guide into the ample half, from well stood at the head of the start, a candle in his hand. Less minds ful of his comfort than Armstrong, away and fastened heavy and is as ready with the tears as any office of the part of the saw him, although but a few days had come and the which showed him the roughed for the head on a level with his head, made the shedows come and so one and so panes, which recalled the staring open his clothes. But his eyes burned down upon her as if their fire had never been

extinguished for a moment. me up!" he commanded, and as she ascended the stair cried impatient-

There is the king's commission." she There is the king's commission, she said quietly, presenting the document to him. He took it without a word, turned and entered the room; she followed him. He placed the candle on a table, did not take the time to write communication, but ripped it asunde and spread open the crinkling parch-ment, holding it up to the light. He contemptuously on the table, mut-

Charles Rex! A wreck you have made of life and opportunity and country." Then to the girl: "Wench you have done well. Would you were a

The pardon for my brother, sir, if titude

"It please you."
"It is ready, and the commission as captain also. You see I trusted you."
"So did another and through his faith he now lies undone at Banbury."
"You have not killed him?" cried ing brass, and the Cromwell sharply, looking with some-thing almost like alarm at the uncanny apparition. All beauty had deserted

Killed him, no. But I have killed his faith in woman, cozened him, lied to him, robbed him, to buy for you, with the name of your maker on yo s, a life that you know was not for-ted, but which you had the power to

hue by the mass of cavern black hair

"Ab, yes, yes, yes. I remember your tongue of old, but it may wag harmless now for all of me. His life was forfeited; aye, and this Scot's as well.

He threw before her the pardon for her brother and his commission as cap-tain, then strode out of the room to

the head of the stair again and she heard his strenuous voice:

"Here, excellency."

Ride at once to the commandant at Banbury. Tell him the Scot goes free. Tell him to send word north and see that he is not molested, but should he turn in his tracks and attempt to reach Oxford again, hold him and send word "Yes, excellency."

He waited at the stair-head until the wine was brought, then took it into the room and placed it on the table before

"I cannot," she cried.

"Drink, drink," he shouted in a voice to harsh that it made her tremble. She lifted the flagon to her lips, and barely

wared, bringing his cienched fist down on the oaken table with a force the made the very room coarseness of an oath and it beat down nor weak resolution as the storm keels and told him to set off for Durham as the flagon drop, raised hands to face and burst into a helpiess wail of weep-The word had all the brutal

lack Bruce with a war neigh came breast on, maddened with the delight of battle.

ling further with this Scot "I have done the crime; I must not shirk the punishment."

"Tut, tut, that is woman's talk. There is no punishment. He dare not place a hand on you. You may have an escort of twenty men, who will see you safe for all the Scots that ever deprelated their neighbors."

The girl dolefully shook her head. "My purishment will take the shape of no hershness from him. It will come to me when I see his face, knowing me thief in the night. This punishment is with me now and will be with me al-

"Woman, I do not like your bearing, alding you. Neither do I like your attitude towards this meddler in affairs of state. What is your relationship to

"Merely that of the highwayman to-

"Sharp words again; hollow sounding brass, and the finklink of cymbals. I ask you if there has been any fooler."

talk between you? "If 'twas so,' tis not an affair of state and I shall follow the example her and her face seemed pinched and state and I shall follow the example small, white as the parchment on the table, and rendered unearthly in its dlers in it?

A wry smile came to the lips of her questioner, and he remarked drily: "told you the wine would do you good. He sat down by the table and wrote the three papers together with the a carded silk ocrd that had wrapped the parchment of the king. Glying her the she descended. He did not offer her hi early daylight was coming through the the stair she turned and looked up at

"The innkeeper at Banbury did everything that was possible for a man to do

in aiding me. Cromwell made no comment on this piece of information, standing there as he were a carven wooden statue, par f the decoration of the hall. She completed her descent, passed outside with-out looking back and mounted the horse which a soldier was helding for her. The birds were twittering in the trees, and the still water of the moat lay like molten silver in the new light. rode up the acclivity, then galoped for Banbury, reaching the town before anyone was astir. The streets were en-

ing. Cromwell's face softened, now that he was obeyed and he looked at this passion-swayed huitan flower with the air of a puzzled man. Then his huge hand patted her heaving stell-ders with some attempt at gentlement.

flow overlooked the stable yard, and he recognized the mumble of the hostler who had assisted him yesterday. He lay still, half drowsed, the mattress most alluring to him, when suddenly he was startled wide awake by a voice he

Then I turn to the left for Brough-

ton?"
"Yes, sir," muttered the hostler.
Armstrong leaped from his bed,
placed his eye at the chinck in the
shutters and peered down into the
stable yard. The voice had not misled
him. De Courcy, sitting on a horse was
ited sathering up the reins and departjust gathering up the reins and departing. The Scot lost no true in pulling on his boots, pushing aside the bed, unbolting the door and making his way down the stair. What did this gally pluraged bird of ill-omen here in the country of the parliagrent when his country of the parliament when his place was beside the king? Was there treachery afoot? It loosed like it. Once outside he saw it was still early with

awning hostler.

"Who was that man you were directing to Broughton?"

"I don't know, sir."

"When did he arrive?"

"Last night, sir. after dark."

"Did he stop in this house?"

"Yes, sir. I thought he was a friend of yours for he knew your horse when was putting up his own. He asked if ou were here, and I told him you were a the room over the yard."

"What is Broughton; a hamlet?"

"It is a castle, sir. Lord Say's castle, about three miles from here. Gen-

about three miles from here. General Cromwell is there now; it is his headquarters in this district."

"Cromwell!"
The young man stood stock still, eyes gazing into vacancy. What traffic had this king's chamberlain with Cromwell? How dared he come within the my sword; a moment since you stood in jeopardy from my pistols; beware highwayman?" parliamentary lines, undisguised, un-

Like inspiration the whole situation lashed upon him. De Courcy knew the flashed upon him. De Courcy knew the burden he carried, and had seen where it was placed. He was on his way to sell his secret, and set the troops on the track of the messenger. He must be off at once and outride the traitor. Before De Courcy had gone his three miles he would have traversed a dozen, and from then on it would be a race to the Secritish border.

"Get him out at once. I will arouse He took three steps toward the inn. then stopped as if shot, his hand clutched his breast.

'By God, he's got the thing itself. Robbed, as I'm a sinner!"

Now the disturbance in the night

she d for wasted not a thought over it. In upon the astonished hostler he swept. "Never mind the saddle, tirely deserted. Cromwell's command having cleared them, and the issible guards of a few hours before, whom the magic password stilled, seemed as Leon-existent as if they had been phan-

toms of a vision.

The sleepy innkeeper received the horse and she crept up the stair of old John's room and knocked upon it until he responded. She gave him his pass

Armstrong grasped the two pistols from the holsters, flung the hesitating hostler upon the animal's back and leaped up in front of him.

"Which way, which way, which

posing horse and rider over and over like a cartwheel flung along the road from the hand of a smith. De Courcy

like a cartwheel flung along the road from the hand of a smith. De Courcy lay partly stunned at the road side, while his frightened steed staggered to had given orders which would block its feet, leaped the hedge with a scream of fear, and scampered across the field to its furthest extremity. Armstrong swung himself to the ground with a quieting word to Bruce, who stood still panting and watching fluence him. She knew him well enough Armstrong swung himself to the ground with a quieting word to Bruce, who stood still panting and watching every movement of his master. A nis tol in each hand, Armstrong stood over

Pe Courcy, faintly.

"You bribed thief, the rope is your end. You'll take no scathe through honorable warfare. Disgorge!"

"Where's old John?"

"I sent him on ahead long since," refrom within his torn doublet the sec nanded it up with a groan to the con-As it was an exact duplicate of the one he had lost, even to the silk-en cord, the honest Scot had not the slightest doubt he had come by his own again, and the prone man was equally convinced that someone had betrayed to Armstrong his secret mission, yet, for the life of him, could not that way. sion, yet, for the life of him, cound not guess how this were possible. The young man placed the document where young man placed the document where pirate?" asked Frances.

"Why do you call the poor where young man placed the document where pirate?" asked Frances.

"Oh, we're comrades," laughed Arm"He thinks me a capable.

"Had I a rope and a hangman with me you would end your life on yonder tree. When first I learned your char-cut a purse himself on occasion in the in jeopardy from my pistols; beware our third meeting, for if you cross my path again I will strangle you with my naked hands, if need be."

De Courcy made no reply. He realized that this man are the land?

ized that this was not a time for controversy. A standing man well armed has manifest advantages over an enemy bruised and on the ground and some thought of this came to the mind of the generous victor, now that his anger was cooling. He felt that it was rather undignified to threaten a helpless adversary, and if he were atraitor to the Banbury! versary, and if he were atraitor to the king, let the king deal with him. So tery, the keeper of dark secrets and whistling to his horse, he sprang on sudden rides, of midnight theft and of his back and years to Barbury at whistling to his horse, he sprang on his back and rode to Banbury at a slower pace than he had traversed the

same road some minutes before. that he had been all but murdered by his fall, and Armstrong examined him minutely, as he would have done with a favorite horse, pronouncing him none the worse for his tumbling, but rather the better, as he was now more supple than he had been for years. He re-warded the man lavishly, nevertheless, and gave him the receipt for a lini-ment good for man and beast, should

after complications ensue. "I hope, sir," whined the man, "that soldier. The open country lay before you did not treat the gentleman you them, the turrets of the town sinking

the hostler, a glint of admiration lighting up his eyes. "Dang me if I did not take thee for a gentleman of the road when I first clapped eyes on thee. Be sure I'll say naught, for I've cut a purse myself in younger days. Those times were better than now. There's too many soldiers and too few gentlemen with fat purses traveling the roads nowadays for our irade." men with rat purses traveling the roads-nowadays for our trade."

Again William laughed and shook hands with the old man, as one high-wayman in a good way of business might condescend to another less pros-

perous, and the veteran hostler boasted of his intimacy with a noted freebooter for the rest of his days. "Rub down my horse well while I am at breakfast," said Armstrong, and, re-

ceiving every assurance that the beast of so excellent a man should receive every attention, he went to the inn and there found Frances awaiting him.
The girl was standing by the window, which was low and long, with a valance of crimpled spotted muslin running athwart the lower half of it. A bench was fixed beneath the window, and on this bench the girl had rested a knee, while her cheek was placed against the diamond panes. The light struck her face and illuminated it strongly and she stood so still that she seemed to form part of a tableau which might have been entitled "Watching." On the

have been entitled "Watching." On the table placed in the center of the room breakfast was spread.

It was a jubilant man who disturbed this quiet picture by his abrupt incoming. The early morning gallop, the excitement of contest, the flush of victory, all had their effect on his bearing, and he came in with the mein of a Saxon prince, his yellow hair almost touching the beams of the low ceiling. The two formed a striking contrast. touching the beams of the low celling. The two formed a striking contrast, when the embodiment of elation approached the embodiment of dejection. There was a new furtiveness in the brief glance she cast upon him, and after her first startled cognizance she looked beyond him, on either side of him, over his head or at his feet, but never turned her eyes full upon him as of yore.

"Ah, my girl," he cried, "you have not slept well. I can see that at once. This will never do; never do at all. But you are certainly looking better this morning than you did last night. Is that not 89?"

Is that not so?"
"You are looking very well," she said, avoiding his question.
"Oh, I've had a morning gallop al-

ready."
"What! With the ride to Scotland still before you? Is not a merciful man merciful to his horse?"
"He should be; but I may say this for Bruce, he enjoyed the ride quite as much as I did. And now I am ravenous for breakfast, and eager for the road again. He tinkled a little handbell that rested on the table. "We have anroad again. He tinkled a little handbell that rested on the table. "We have another splendid day for it. The sunrise this morning was positively inspiring. Come, lass, and sit you down. We must get the roses back into those cheeks, and I think the ride today will do it, for we will be nearing the north ever nearing the north, and you are just like me, you are yearning for the northland, where all the men are brave and all the women fair."

"Fair and false, perhaps you would add. That was your phrase, I think."

William laughed heartily, drawing in his chair.

him, if she could, not to return, When to be aware that his own personal safe ty weighed but lightly with him, and he very opposition would determine tim to try conclusions with it, un-

These reflections troubled her until

Good. We shall scon overtake him. Good-by, pirate," he cried to the grin-ning hostler. "May I meet you on the road next time with a thousand pounds on you, and if you whisper 'Banbury' to me, I will not lift a penny of it."
"Good luck to you and your fair lady,

sir," replied the enriched old man, rais ing his cap in salute. He wished more travelers like the brawny Scot came

"And why does he think you are a

"Ah, that would be telling. Supp it is because I escort the fairest lady in the land? The sex have ever fa-vored the biggest rascals. No, I shall not incriminate myself, but shall main tain my pose of the amiable hypo-Here rides Will Armstrong, the est man-if you take his own word for it. But the hostler knows better. He sees secret comings and goings and draws his own conclusions. Banbury

Oh, Lord, I shall never forge treachery. Ask the Broughton road where Cromwell lies, to reveal what it knows. Things happen along that The hostler made grievous pretence track which the king knows nothing of and his royal signature takes journeys that he never counted upon.

moaned the girl, whitening to the lips of his words on his companion were now clear of Banbury and trot ting along the Coventry road. Their departure had met with no opposition and they had seen not even a single

"My foolish words have frightened "Very much the same," cried Arm-stang, with a laugh, "but you are the better off, because I left him neither hear when the time comes for the tell-

terday morning broke. Come, Frances, let us gallop. That and a trust in the Lord will remedy all the ills of man

ew they have cast.

She was glad of the respite, and they set off at full speed, nevertheless her mind was sorely troubled. "What did he know, what did he know?" bears through her brain in unison with the clatter of the horse's hoofs. It was not possible that chance had brought him thus to the very center of her guilty secret. Cromwell, treachery, midnight stealth, the Broughton road, these words and phrases tortured her. Was this then the line of his revenge? Did he know all and did he purpose to keeb her thus in suspense, hinting, soothing her fears, then reviving them, making her black crime the subject of jest and laughter? She cast a glance over he shoulder. Banbury had disappeared, they were alone, flying over the land, they were alone, flying

"Do I know the person "O, yes. You knew the person long before I did. It was a person I trusted. but now know to be a traitor and a thief."

"He way is clear. There is no one in sight and we can outride them when thours."

'Theard it strike 3, but lay so locked in drowsiness that I new not the Lord was calling to me. If the seven sleepers were melted into one, I would out sleep that one. Well, to get on, I was robbed in the night. It must have been at that hour, for I remember dimly some sort of disturbance. But Providence stood my friend. By the merest chance it might seem, but not by chance as I believe. I saw the cerature make for Broughton. 'So here's for Broughton,' cried I, 'on the bare back of Black Bruce, and see if my good pistols would win back what had been stolen from me.' The Broughton road it was, and the pistols did the bisiness," saying this, he whisked from his pocket the king's commission, waving it triumphantly aloft. Her wide eyes drank in the amazing sight of it, slowly brimming with superstitious fear, and then she asked a duplicate of the question that had been asked of her a tew hours before.

"Did you kill Cromwell?"

"From the their, of course. He never reached Cromwell."

The way is clear. There is no one in sight and we can outride them when they come."

"They are riding across country to intercept us. Oh, let not my arms hold you back for destruction. Cromwell was only at he had to take you openly."

"He dare not. Have no fear."

"He way is clear. Threis indication. Tromwell will move the world to tear it would still. Cromwell still

"From the thief, of course. He never reached Cromwell."
"O, I'm going mad! Who is the thief, who is the thief?"
"De Courcy, if you must know, Why does this trivial matter so disturb you? De Courcy followed us from Oxford last night and was lodged at our in Programment." night and was lodged at our inn. By some means he penetrated into my room, stole this from me and I never missed it until I saw him ride for Broughton and not even then, to tell the the exact truth. But I remembered that he had seen me place this paper in the inside pocket of my vest in the

"No, but that's soon done." He untied the cord and unfolded the sheepskin. She leabed eagerly forward

and scanned the writing, while Arm-strong read it aloud. "You see," he cried gleefully. "Of course it is the commission. There are the names of Traquair and all the rest, just as I gave them to the secretary,

"It is a duplicate. Cromwell has the original. You never left De Courcy alive within a mile of Broughton cas-

as I have seen thim, yet alive, never-

"I did that very thing. Not as lively

have stood too long chattering here."
"All in good time, Frances. There is no more hurry than ever there was; less, indeed, for it seems to me that Cromwell, or some reason, wants to come at this by fraud and no by force, but now that De Courcy's name is mentioned between us, I ask you what know against him more than I have

"Against him? I know everything against him. Would that you had killed him. He would sell his soul, if he has one. He robbed my dying father, and on the day of his death, when I was the only one in London who did not know he was executed, De Courcy not know he was executed. De Courcy lured me to his apartments at Whitehall, under pretence of leading me to the king that I might plead for my father's life. There he attempted to entrap me, snapped in my hand the sword which I had clutched from the wall to defend myself and I struck him twice in the face and blinded him with his comthe face and blinded him with his ow false blood and so escaped. then, my fear when I saw him there

The truth! The truth, at last the ruth!" shouted Armstrong, as If weight had fallen from his shoulders "The truth has a ring like honest stee and cannot be mistaken when once you hear it. He lied to me about you in Oxford, and I called him a liar, and would have proven it on him, but that he told me you were in danger. should have killed the whelp this morning, but that he could not defend him

'The truth, yes: but only part of it

"The truth, yes: but only part of it. He did not rob you last night."
"Nonsense. He did."
"I robbed you. I stole into your room and robbed you. I carried the original of that document to Cromwell himself, and it is now in his hands. It was the pile of my brother's life. My brother was set on your track by Cromwell, and being wounded, I took up his task. Do you understand? That was my mission to Oxford. To delude you, to rob you, and I have done it."
"Girl, you are distraught."
"I am not. Every word I tell you is true."

"You are saying that to shield some

"Look, William Armstrong, for two "Look, William Armstrong, for two hours and more last night you held me by the wrist. There is the bracelet with which you presented me, black proof of the black guilt I confess to you."

She held her hand aloft and the sleeve fell away from the white and rounded arm, marred only by the dark circles where his finzers had pressed. "Do yow say I did that?"

"Yes, if still you do not believe me,

neasure your fingers with the shad-w they have cast. She reached out her hand to him, and

he took it in his left, streking the bruised wrist with his right, but looking into her eyes all the while.

"Frances, it is this secret that stood between us."

Cease this fooling. The moments are

too precious for it."
"This is no fooling. I never was in

It was some moments before Frances could speak, but at last she said very quietly, looking down at her horse's mane:

"Tell me the story, and I will tell you the name of the thier."

"Tou slept baddy last night. Did you hear anything?"

"Let heard the chiefs strike the sight and we can outride them when

I I heard the clock strike the sight and we can outride them when they come."

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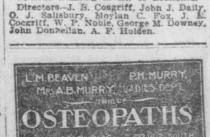
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